

Be More Involved

Although teens who are close to their parents are less likely to engage in risky behaviors, ALL teens are at risk when it comes to alcohol and other drugs. It's important for parents to talk to their teens and build open and trusting relationships. The more involved you are in your children's lives, the more valued they'll feel, and the more likely they'll be to respond to you.

1

Establish together time. Establish a regular weekly routine for doing something special with your teen even if it's just going out for ice cream. Even a few minutes of conversation while you're cleaning up after dinner or right before bedtime can help the family catch up and establish the open communication that is essential to raising drug-free children.

2

Have family meetings. Held regularly at a mutually agreed upon time, family meetings provide a forum for discussing triumphs, grievances, projects, questions about discipline, and any topic of concern to a family member. Ground rules help. Everyone gets a chance to talk; one person talks at a time without interruption; everyone listens, and only positive, constructive feedback is allowed. To get resistant children to join in, combine the get-together with incentives such as post-meeting pizza or assign them important roles such as recording secretary or rule enforcer.

3

Don't be afraid to ask where your kids are going, who they'll be with and what they'll be doing. Get to know your child's friends and their parents so you're familiar with their activities.

4

Try to be there after school. The danger zone for drug use is between 3 and 6 PM; arrange flex time at work if you can. If your child will be with friends, make sure there is adult supervision — not just an older sibling.

5

Eat meals together as often as you can. Meals are a great opportunity to talk about the day's events, to unwind, reinforce and bond. Studies show that kids whose families eat together at least 5 times a week are less likely to be involved with drugs or alcohol.